

Jacob Shimer House
NW of Old Mine Road
Millville Vicinity
Montague Township
Sussex County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-818

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NJ,
19-MOGU.V,
5-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NJ-818

JACOB SHIMER HOUSE

Location: .1 mile northwest of Old Mine Road, State Route 521, .1 mile north of Millville, Montague Township, Sussex County, New Jersey.

USGS Milford Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 18.518240. 4573460.

Present Owner: United States Government.

Present Use: Demolished by 1980.

Significance: Jacob Shimer probably built this house in the 1790s on property belonging to his father, Captain Abraham Shimer. It remained in the family until 1912, but was apparently occupied by tenant farmers in the later nineteenth century. The house exhibits some fine Federal woodwork.

PART II. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: ca. 1790s. The house is first mentioned in a 1798 deed in which Abraham Shimer gives land to his son Jacob "near the road that leads from Abraham Shimer to Jacob Shimer's house....."

2. Architect: Not known.

3. Original and subsequent owners:

Records in Sussex County Court House, Newton, New Jersey Captain Abraham Shimer settled in this area prior to the Revolution and acquired extensive land holdings.

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|------|--|--------------------|
| 1798 | Date: 4 Sept. 1798 | Rec. 28 April 1803 |
| | Deed Book Vol. I | p. 27 |
| | Abraham Shimer of Montague to Jacob Shimer of Montague. In consideration of natural and parental love for son Jacob: 15 acres "...near the road that leads from Abraham Shimer to Jacob Shimer's house..." | |
| 1816 | Date: 12 Feb. 1816 | Rec. 22 Feb. 1816 |
| | Deed Book Vol. F-2 | p. 185 |
| | Isaac Shimer and Elizabeth (wife) of Montague to Jacob Shimer of Montague | |
| | \$1000 for 1/3 undivided real estate of Jacob Shimer, dec'd. | |

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- 1825 Date: 12 October 1825 Rec. 27 Jan. 1827
Deed Book Vol. D-3 p. 210
Abraham Shimer & Elizabeth (wife) of Lackawaxen, to Jacob Shimer of Montague \$900 for 1/3 undivided part of: 15 acres known as the house lot whereon Jacob Shimer now lives, given to Jacob Shimer, Sr. by Capt. Abraham Shimer
11 acres and 10 acres
- 1856 Date: 17 May 1856 Rec. 17 Sept. 1856
Deed Book Vol. S-4 p. 497
Jacob Shimer of Montague to Abraham Shimer of Montague \$2,000 for two tracts: 113.85 acres, 51.84 acres
- 1891 Abraham Shimer died 20 Jan. 1891
Will Book Vol. J p. 399 p. 399
At the time he resided in Port Jervis, New York. Real estate went to wife Jennie K. Shimer and sons Frank Shimer and Evi Shimer. The land was mortgaged to support Jennie K.
- 1912 Date: 28 Oct. 1912 Rec. 18 Nov. 1912
Deed Book Vol. B-11 p. 38
Henry Huston, Special Master in Chancery of the State of N.J. to Robert K. Wick
By order of Chancery Court 29 August 1912, \$6525 for 7 tracts
- 1912 Date: 11 Dec. 1912 Rec. 2 Jan. 1913
Deed Book Vol. B-11 p. 215
Robert K. Wick & Grace E. (wife) of Jamaica, Queens Co., N.J. to Lewis S. Merrell of Montague
\$7000 for 7 tracts
- 1921 Lewis S. Merrell died intestate 15 December 1921 leaving land to his children Elias M. Merrell & Edna M. Davenport
- 1924 Date: 29 March 1924 Rec. 7 April 1924
Deed Book Vol. N-12 p. 557
Elias M. Merrell & Mabel G. (wife) of Jersey City, N.J. to Edna M. Davenport of Branchville
All undivided 1/2 interest in 8 tracts
- 1950 Date: 6 October 1950 Rec. 6 October 1950
Deed Book Vol. 465 p. 310
Edna M. Davenport & husband of Branchville, N.J. to Abraham Medwin of Parsippany-Troy Hills, N.J.
8 tracts

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1957 Date: 5 Sept. 1957 Rec. 5 Sept. 1957
Deed Book Vol. 615 p. 70
Abraham Medwin & Sarah (wife) of Montague to Lloyd Rackmill of
Milford
8 tracts

4. Builder, suppliers: Jacob's father, Capt. Abraham Shimer, owned a saw mill in partnership with neighbor, Julius Foster.
5. Original plans and construction: The main portion of the house was apparently built in two stages. The west rooms and stairhall predate the east rooms. The original portion probably dates from the 1790s; the east rooms, with their more elaborate woodwork, probably date from the early nineteenth century.
6. Alterations and additions: A one-story lean-to addition, probably dating from the last half of the nineteenth century, is on the west end of the south elevation.

According to Elias Merrell (born 1890), there was a horse-powered churn at the east end of the house. The kitchen addition was greatly altered and modernized. In the early 1900s the farm had about 50 head of cattle in a large barn, now burned, six horses, and about 100 pigs in the long barn near the house. Running water was piped to the house and barn from a spring about a mile up the hill.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Abraham Shimer, who served as a captain in the Revolution, was one of the few people in the area to own many slaves. His son Jacob owned this house.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Interview with Elias Merrell (born 1890), Hainesville, N.J., August 28, 1970.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Snell, James P. History of Sussex & Warren Counties, New Jersey. Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1881. pp. 362-363.
Decker, Amelia Stickney. That Ancient Trail. Trenton, 1962. p. 133.

Prepared by: William C. Badger
Project Historian
HABS
August 1970

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: A one-and-a-half-story frame dwelling featuring late eighteenth-century paneling.
2. Condition of fabric: Although the structural frame seems to be in fair condition, the finish of the walls and ceilings, the trim and sash are greatly deteriorated.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main one-and-a-half-story portion is rectangular, measuring 46'-5" x 19'-7". On the west end of the south side, a one-story lean-to addition measures 24'-4" x 18'-4".
2. Foundations: Mortared rubble walls of local stone extend below the cellar floor.
3. Wall construction and finish: Exterior frame walls are 7 1/2" thick. The siding is plain lapped weatherboarding, exposed 6" in some places and 7 1/2" in others. On the end walls, the stone masonry of the fireplaces is exposed at the first-floor level only.
4. Structural system, framing: Little of the structure is visible except in the cellar. There the ceiling beams are unpeeled logs, 12" to 14" in diameter, 3' to 4' on center, smoothed on the upper side only.
5. Porches, stoops: On the south side of the house, an area 6' wide is paved with slate. There is no evidence of a covered porch on the original house.
6. Chimneys: There are brick chimneys, approximately 24" x 40", on each end of the house. Each chimney served two fireplaces, one on each floor.

7. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: A door on the north elevation has been blocked; only the three-light transom window remains. The entrance on the south elevation has a similar three-light transom window. The door measures 2'-10" x 6'-4", with horizontal paneling.
- b. Windows: Windows are small with single-hung sash, no balances or pins. Most windows have been replaced with two-over-two-light sash. Two windows in the gable of the west end have six-over-six-light sash.

8. Roof: The early rectangular portion had a simple ridge roof, 10 in 12 pitch. The main roof on the west end of the house was extended to cover the one-story addition with a continuous slope of $5\frac{1}{2}$ in 12; this created an asymmetrical roof shape on the west facade. All slopes are covered with raised-rib sheetmetal.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans

- a. First floor: The main portion of the house has a center hall with a room on either side. The hall and west half of the house evidently predated the east, accounting for the asymmetrical fenestration.
 - b. Second floor: The second floor matches the first, with rooms on either side of a central hall.
 - c. Basement: The basement is divided into two rooms, not in the center, but below the wall between the center hall and east room on the first floor.
2. Stairway: In the central hall the stair rises steeply (8" rise, $8\frac{1}{2}$ " tread) in an "L" pattern to the upper floor. The handrail is of slender, attractive design with a turned newel post, and well-spaced, thin turned spindles. The railing is natural finish mahogany; the steps are paint finish.
3. Flooring: Wide boards are used (8" to 12"). Portions are covered with linoleum. The basement is floored with stone in the west portion and dirt in the east.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls are plaster on wood lath, except wood walls enclosing closet spaces. Walls and ceilings on the first floor are papered; upstairs the walls and ceilings are painted. On the first floor there is a baseboard ($7\frac{1}{2}$ ") and a chair rail; in the rooms above there is no chair rail.

5. Decorative features and trim: Doors and windows have molded trim, 3" in width. All fireplaces, now permanently boarded up, have decorative wood mantels; the one on the first floor, east end, with the adjacent closets, is the most ornate. The mantel has pilaster-like side forms that are shaped with molded trim. This same trim, combined with an elliptical arch, form the design of the trim for the doors to the closets on either side of the fireplace.
 6. Lighting and Heating: Electrical wiring, no fixtures. Original fireplaces boarded up; evidence of later use of stoves. In the central hall there is a floor furnace; fired with oil, now no longer operative.
- D. Site: The house facing south, is approached through a brushy wooded area along a poorly-improved farm road that served the group of barns and other farm structures, and the fields beyond.

Prepared by: Prof. Melvin M. Rotsch
Project Supervisor
HABS
August, 1970

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, supervised by the National Park Service and funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The project, which extended from 1967 to 1971, was under the general direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS. This structure was measured and drawn in the summer of 1970 under the direction of Melvin M. Rotsch (Texas A & M University), Project Supervisor, by student assistant architects John Albers (University of Florida) and Gary Kreger (University of Virginia) in the HABS field office at Millbrook, New Jersey, in the project area of the Tocks Island Reservoir and the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. The historical data was written by Wesley Shank and William C. Badger, project historians, in 1970. The written data was edited for transmittal to the Library of Congress in the summer of 1980 by Alison K. Hoagland of the HABS staff. The photographs were taken by George Eisenman in 1970.